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Church Concern Spreads Over South Africa

(Johannesburg) - An appeal launched by Dr. Ambrose Reeves, Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg, calls for food, clothing and money to aid victims of the shooting by police in Sharpeville. (see EPS No. 13)

The drive by fourteen organisations to assist the Africans and their dependents, includes an estimated target of between £7,000 and £8,000 (\$19,600 and \$22,400) for legal defence.

A statement by the bishop makes four points arising out of a survey made by firms of lawyers at the request of the Consultative Committee of the Fourteen Organisations (in South Africa) of which he is chairman.

"Firstly, proper methods must be used in the future to control crowds without this terrible danger to life;

"Secondly, the time has come in South Africa when a clear distinction must be made between the functions of an army and those of a police force;

"Thirdly, as we have maintained for a long time, the crux of many of our problems here is the entire lack of consultation between those in authority and the responsible leaders of the African people;

"Fourthly, it is our contention that the South African Government has shown no knowledge of the true state of affairs at Sharpeville and Langa, by claiming that these disturbances were an attempt at organised revolt."

The statement goes on to say "we are deeply concerned that the authorities have shown no sense of contrition at what has happened and continually attempt to justify the action taken".

Alarm has been expressed by leaders of missions and of the English-speaking churches of South Africa at the government's detention of ex-chief Albert Luthuli, the leader of the African National Congress. They warn that immobilisation of Luthuli, who is a declared advocate of non-violent action, might play into the hands of extremists who plan violent demonstrations. Ex-chief Luthuli, a Congregationalist, has repeatedly based his stand on Christian conviction.

From the Netherlands come reports that member churches of the Dutch Ecumenical Council plan to send a letter of protest against racial discrimination in South Africa to the South African churches.

In Utrecht Protestant leaders explained that the step was necessary in view of the fact that the largest church in South Africa is officially called the Dutch Reformed Church and leaders in the Netherlands had to dissociate themselves from any suggestion of support for policies of segregation and discrimination.

A meeting at Westminster called by Christian Action and supported by a crowd of more than 2,000 people sent messages of admiration and sympathy to South African leaders including Dr. Reeves, the Anglican Archbishop of Capetown (Dr. Joost de Blank), ex-chief Albert Luthuli and author Alan Paton. The meeting also sent a message to Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, South African premier, seeking abandonment of the policy of apartheid.

Other speakers at the meeting included Father Trevor Huddleston, Anglican priest of the Community of the Resurrection, who served the Parish of Sophiatown near Johannesburg before his return to England and columnist William Connor ("Cassandra") of the London "Daily Mirror".

Mr. Connor said that the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa carried weight in the country and seemed to be modifying its views about the way to face the race problem.

EPS, Geneva

American YMCAs Intensify Youth Exchange with Russia


(New York) - American YMCAs have been asked to explore exchange of professional youth workers between the USSR and the USA.

The request came from the Committee of Youth Organisations of the Soviet Union following an exchange of visits between a ten-man team of YMCA members from the USA and ten young Russians.

Other travellers in both directions also made contacts under the scheme, which was approved by the USSR and US governments.

The American YMCA movement has set up a committee for East-West relations to guide future visits and set directives for the proposed exchange of professional youth leaders.

The committee suggested a search for "mutual interests", but "with full recognition of the differences or even contradictions in the cultures they represent". The youth workers will look for useful ideas in the methods of youth work used in each country.



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When student delegations go they will be asked to look for formative influences on youth's attitude to work, religion, culture and the nation.

The YMCAs in America plan to use lessons learned from the exchanges in drawing up future programmes.

A group of Russians will arrive in New York on April 15 and an American team leaves for Moscow on May 15. EPS, Geneva

Kentucky Southern Baptists Seek Co-operation

(Louisville) - Southern Baptists in Kentucky have taken the initiative in suggesting an annual conference in that state between evangelical churches, Roman Catholics and Jewish leaders to face "matters which vitally affect church-state relationships, particularly in the field of education and health".

The step marks the first lead of its kind ever given by a Southern Baptist group.

The resolution calling for the setting-up of the conference deplores "the mounting tensions in public affairs as religious groups bring their often divergent policies and practices to bear upon public life".

Southern Baptists in the United States are usually reluctant to become involved in Christian co-operative ventures. EPS, Geneva

Baptist Church Reopened in Madrid

(Madrid) - Two Spanish Baptist pastors and a few church members have reopened the Third Baptist Church in Madrid with police permission.

The building had been sealed by the authorities since September 1958.

The pastor, the Rev. José Nunez, received a suspended two months prison sentence last October for having removed seals after a previous closing as long ago as 1956, but the present unsealing follows police consent.

The Southern Baptist Convention in the United States, which is linked with the Baptist churches in Spain, owns the reopened property. EPS, Geneva

Lutherans Chart Study of Roman Catholicism

(Porto Alegre, Brazil) - Plans for a detailed study of contemporary Roman Catholicism by the Lutheran World Federation have been approved by the LWF Executive Committee, meeting in Porto Alegre, March 20 - 25. (see EPS No. 8)

Professor K.E. Skydsgaard, on leave from the University of Copenhagen, will lead research for the next few years as the first stage in establishing an independent research foundation for detailed study of other Christian confessions.

The announcement of the study says Professor Skydsgaard will concentrate on "Roman Catholicism as it appears in contemporary theology and church life" and write a book on the "controversial problems which are especially discussed in the theology of the Reformation".

The LWF's Special Commission on Inter-Confessional Research reported that "within this framework Professor Skydsgaard will use some time for studying the problem of Scripture and tradition, especially in view of recent developments in Mariology and other problems. Since he is also the chairman of the Commission on Tradition and Traditions in the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches," the report says, "Professor Skydsgaard's contribution will at this point also be of specific importance for ecumenical work."

The Danish expert will travel to important Roman Catholic centres, including Rome, where he will "enlarge his experience through personal contacts and will also give some specific consideration to the Pope's plans to call an 'ecumenical' council".

Professor Skydsgaard is being asked to investigate sources of friction on the mission field. He will make this part of the inquiry in co-operation with the Lutheran World Federation's Commission on World Mission.

As part of a long-range attempt to involve younger theologians in the study, Professor Skydsgaard will run a graduate seminar on the Council of Trent for Scandinavian graduate students in the summer.

He will also develop a library in the Ecumenical Institute of the University of Copenhagen, of which he is director. It will be transferred to the permanent foundation for interconfessional studies when the site has been fixed, probably after the LWF's Helsinki Assembly in 1963.

The Lutheran World Federation will seek \$25,000 a year for the project until 1963 from outside its normal budget. (see also EPS No. 8)

During its Porto Alegre sessions the LWF executive admitted three younger churches into membership of the Federation: the 22,000-member Lutheran Church of Central Tanganyika, the 28,000-member Usambara-Digo Lutheran Church in the same country, and the 4,500-member Taiwan Lutheran Church on the island of Formosa.

Their acceptance brings the Federation's roll of affiliated churches to 64 in 34 countries, representing a combined membership of nearly 50,000,000 of the estimated 71,000,000 Lutherans in the world. EPS, Geneva

Christian Disunity in Israel Under Fire

(Munich) - An officer of the International Hebrew Christian Alliance has called division among Christian missions in Israel "a sad story".

In a speech made at Munich, Germany, Pastor H.D. Leuner of London, European Secretary of the organisation, declared: "All the division and disunity of our churches finds expression in Israel."

He referred to "unfortunate confessionalism" and disunity inside the thirty-five different Catholic missionary orders and the Protestant denominations.

According to Pastor Leuner Roman Catholics now have 38 mission schools in Israel and Protestants twelve.

"The 300 to 400 Jewish Christians living in Israel must pay the price for the deplorable conditions existing in the Christian missions," he said.

EPS, Geneva

DDR Bishop Seeks Frank Talks with State

(Dresden, East Germany) - Bishop Gottfried Noth of the Evangelical Church in Saxony (DDR) has urged that the door be kept open for frank talks with the country's Communist political leaders.

He described such conversations as the only way to overcome misunderstandings "even if they do not always produce practical results or eliminate differences of opinion".

The bishop told his synod that church-state relations are made worse because the Church's stand is often misinterpreted as political action. He pointed out that Christian decisions are based on something quite different from political expediency, propaganda or tactics.

"The Church's aims are not political," Bishop Noth said; "they are the result of its obedience to God."

He went on to say that this way of thinking was utterly alien to people who regard God as a figment of imagination and this made the struggle for a basis of frank discussion all the more difficult. EPS, Geneva

French Reformed Church Defends "Lay Schooling"

(Paris) - The National Council of the Reformed Church has come out strongly in favour of keeping state aid in France confined to non-church schools.

The church's stand follows controversy over the government's legislation in favour of state aid to church schools, which had already been opposed by French Protestant schoolteachers as a denial of the state's policy of "confessional neutrality" in education. (see EPS No. 13)

The church's statement supported Pastor Marc Boegner, president of the French Protestant Federation, who had earlier declared: "The greater part of French Protestantism supports the principle of lay schooling, seeing in it the guarantee of religious liberty and certain essential values included within that liberty."

The French Reformed Church's council pointed out "dangers" to religious liberty and to "harmony in the schools" arising from Roman Catholic teaching about the instruction of the young. The Protestant church cited especially article 1374 of Roman Catholic Canon Law, which says:

"Catholic children shall not attend schools that are non-Catholic, confessionally neutral or of mixed religious composition - that is to say those that are also open to non-Catholic pupils. It is the exclusive province of the diocesan bishop to determine, in accordance with the instructions of the Apostolic See, under what circumstances and with what safeguards attendance at these schools may be permitted, in such a manner as to avoid perversion of the children's faith."

The French Reformed Church also said it "would see the same dangers in setting up official schools under the jurisdiction of a state whose ideology was a threat to religious liberty or liberty of opinion".

Pointing out that the Reformed churches in France had never sought subsidies for Protestant schools, the statement said the churches "do not require of their members that they send their children to Protestant institutions".

In a closing section the Reformed Church's council says that its position is not necessarily valid for other countries and other Christians.

"Under differing political and religious circumstances," says the statement, "a genuine pluralism in education, recognised and upheld by the state, does not necessarily constitute a threat to the liberty of citizens, to harmony in the schools and to the neutral attitude of the state. It might even guarantee them." EPS, Geneva

In Brief

The tenth Baptist World Congress in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 26 - July 3, will draw together 20,000 Baptists from 106 countries. The Baptist World Alliance announces that 40 Australian Baptists have already left Australia by ship on their way to the meeting.

The Friends World Committee (Quakers) reports an increase in Quaker world membership of 19,000 in the last ten years. The present world figure stands at 194,862.

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Twenty-nine French-speaking groups in the Polynesian Islands have combined to form a 3,000-member Polynesian Alliance of YMCAs affiliated with the Central Committee of the French YMCA.

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Pentecostal groups in Italy, with an estimated total constituency of 100,000 adherents, have been officially recognised by the Italian Government as "The Assemblies of God in Italy". Their new legal status gives them the right to own land and buildings.

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Representatives of churches in a number of countries that have been theologically influenced by the Dutch thinker Jacobus Arminius will celebrate the 400th anniversary of his birth with a series of lectures in Leyden and Amsterdam, August 4 - 6, 1960.

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Archbishop Iakovos of the Greek Orthodox Church in North and South America has recommended the establishment of a parochial nursery school in every parish of the church in the USA to ensure religious training of young children.

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The Overseas Mission Society within the Protestant Episcopal Church (Anglican) in the USA has initiated a full-time programme "to prepare laymen going abroad in secular service to be more sensitive and effective representatives of the Christian Faith". The new project, to be called Laymen International, is financed by an anonymous gift of \$20,000 and will be directed by Honolulu-born Episcopal priest Samuel Van Culin.

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"Canadian Bible Society, Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society" is the new name of the former British and Foreign Bible Society in Canada. The Canadian society with 3,500 local branches in the Dominion, is the third largest in the world and distributes over 300,000 scriptures in 75 languages in Canada every year. In 1959 it sent \$457,000 to assist Bible distribution overseas.

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A plea for the payment of higher wages to non-white employees in South Africa has been made by the Rev. A.H. Meiring, moderator of the General Synod of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in the Transvaal. Writing in Die Kerkbode, the church's official organ, Mr. Meiring says "there are public bodies, like municipalities, which could set the right example. The same must be done in private homes, in shops and on farms", he adds.

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The Baptist Union of Pakistan has withdrawn from church union negotiations for a United Church of Pakistan. The Baptists have based their withdrawal on the need to preserve liberty of conscience about adult believers' baptism for those christened as infants, alleged ambiguity in sections of the plan on ministry and church government, and the danger of creating "another denomination" in East Pakistan, where the Baptist churches work.

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CIMADE, the French ecumenical inter-church aid agency, has commended a plan for fasting and prayer on Good Friday to aid uprooted populations in Algeria. The idea, promoted in some of the parishes of the French Reformed Church, calls for an all-day fast and an offering, with prayer for Algeria, of money saved.

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The Protestant men's community of Taizé, in France, has announced plans for the inauguration of ecumenical meetings this summer at the conference centre it has erected in the nearby village of Cormatin (see EPS No. 45, 1959). Among conferences listed for July, August and September are two camps for European Christian youth and a meeting on the problems posed for the ecumenical movement by denominationalism. EPS, Geneva

